ORNITOLOGIA

A NEW SPECIES OF DUCK FROM CENTRAL COLOMBIA

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For a number of years there has been persistent report of "black ducks" from the mountain lakes of central Colombia, with the supposition on the part of hunters that these were the well-known species of that name of eastern North America. The senior author made some inquiry into the matter especially following a note published in CALDASIA, No. 9, Jan. 6, 1944, p. 407, where Mr. F. C. Lehmann gave a brief summary of what was known of these birds. His account indicates that dark-colored ducks are of common occurrence in various part of Colombia, especially in the Bogotá Savanna where they are called "pico de oro" or "picodioro". He recorded others near Cali in the Cauca Valley where they are known as "pato amarillo". The matter is of especial interest since the black duck of North America, *Anas rubripes,* while migratory in the northern part of its range is not known to pass south of the southern United States except for two or three casual records from the West Indies. Shortly before this, on September 17, 1943, Brother Nicéforo María of the Instituto de La Salle in Bogotá wrote that he has forwarding to the U. S. National Museum as a gift a small collection of birds taken principally by himself for which he desired identifications. When these arrived in due time there was among them a strange duck somewhat resembling *Anas spinicauda,* but differing in form and especially in much darker color. There was some supposition that it might be a hybrid, but this seemed hardly probable, so that the question of the "black ducks" reported from this area came immediately to mind.

The whole question was discussed in correspondence between the two authors of the present paper to the end that more material was

collected and four additional specimens were forwarded to the U. S. National Museum. These with the specimens preserved in the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales and the Instituto de la Salle in Bogotá leave no doubt that they represent a form new to science.

The junior author has seen this duck nesting in Lake Tota and Páramo de Toquilla (alt. 3500 m.), Boyacá. A few females with fully developed eggs were taken at Tota in August, 1945. Only a few years ago, when drainage works in the swampy part of Lake Fúquene had not yet been undertaken, the species was much more common in that locality than it is now. Many were then killed almost daily by local hunters and during weekends by sportsmen from Bogotá. The duck is a year-round inhabitant of lakes in the Eastern Andes, and it is much sought for by hunters because of its large size. It seldom flies high and is rather easily shot down.

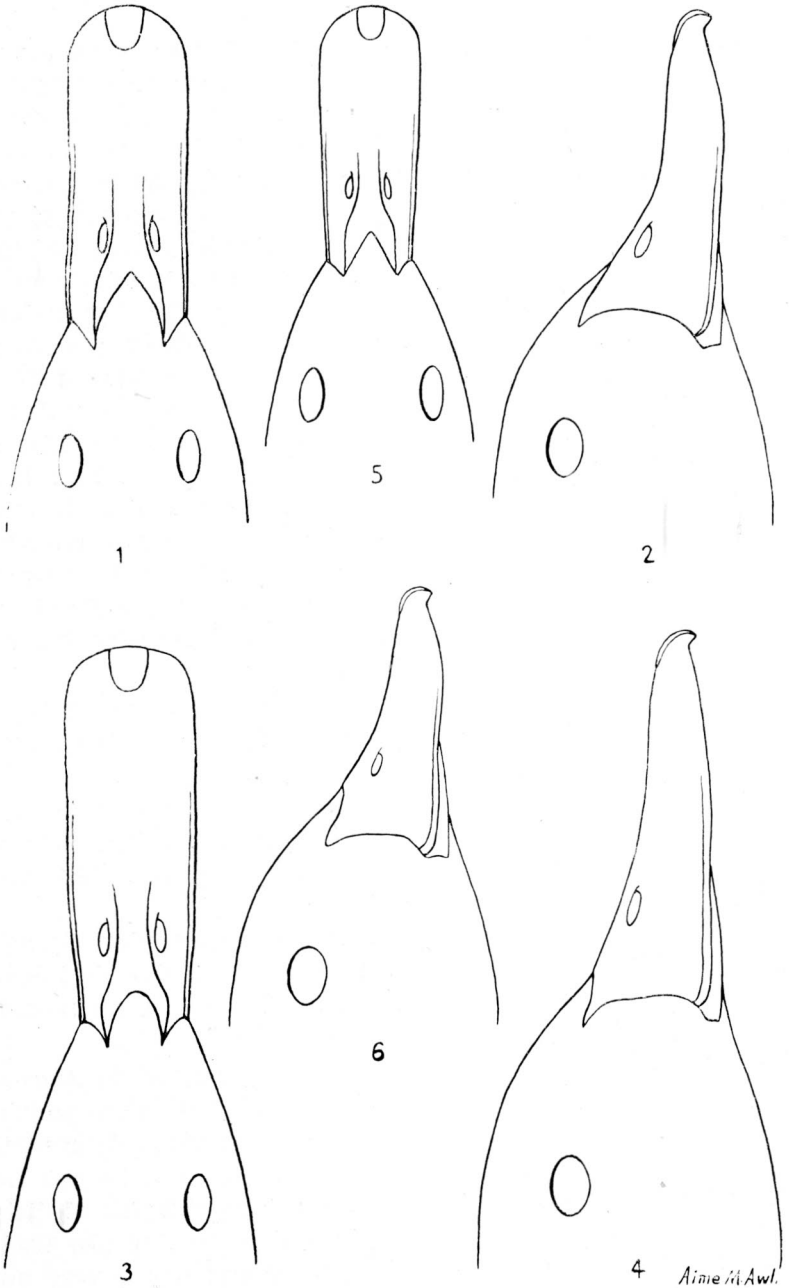
The species has often been secured by sportsmen in the Bogotá Savanna, in the marshes at La Herrera, Cucunubá (near Ubaté), and Tibabuyes (near Suba), not very far from the city of Bogotá.

We take pleasure in dedicating this to Brother Nicéforo María because his specimen served first to identify the species, and in recognition of his studies in the ornithology of Colombia.

Anas niceforoi sp. nov.

Characters.—Similar to *Anas spinicauda* Vieillot (*Anas spinicauda* Vieillot, Nouv. Dict. Hist. Nat., vol. 5, 1816, p. 135, Buenos Aires), but outline of frontal feathering rounded instead of pointed, and not projecting as far forward; bill much longer; line of culmen straighter, much less convex (see figures 3 and 4); central rectrices decidedly less produced in male; coloration much darker throughout.

Description.—Type, Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Sección de Ornitología No. B 235, male, Laguna de Tota, Boyacá, 3,070 meters elevation, taken August 31, 1945, by José I. Borrero. Forehead and sides of head snuff brown, with the feathers lined along the shaft with blackish slate, producing small, irregular, broken streaks; center of crown dull fuscous-black, with very faint edgings of snuff brown; sides of neck Saccardo's umber, lined as above; hindneck dull buffy brown; back, scapulars, rump and upper tail-coverts fuscous-black, with wide edgings varying from sayal brown to snuff brown; wing-coverts hair brown, the most anterior lesser coverts



Figures 1-6. The bills of three related species of ducks of the genus *Anas*. 1-2 *Anas spinicauda*. 3-4 *Anas niceforoi*. 5-6 *Anas georgica*. (Slightly reduced).

lightly margined with snuff brown; speculum dull black, with a very faint sheen of bronze, margined anteriorly by a prominent light line of cinnamon-buff to pinkish buff on the tips of the greater coverts, and posteriorly by another line mainly of pinkish buff; primaries fuscous—black; ends of tertials fuscous; central rectrices fuscous-black, acuminate, only slightly longer than the adjacent pair; outer rectrices fuscous, margined lightly with olive-buff; throat dull grayish white, with fine dots of fuscous-black; foreneck dull Saccardo's umber, lined and dotted irregularly and heavily with fuscous-black; upper breast, and under tail-coverts dull sayal brown; sides and flanks avellaneous; lower breast and abdomen pale olive-buff, the feathers fuscous-black centrally, producing heavy, concealed, or partly concealed spots that are most prominent on the sides and under tail-coverts; outer under wing-coverts between hair brown and Chaetura drab, the outer ones with slight margins of snuff brown; inner ones hair brown, with narrow distal bars of pale olive-buff. Bill (from a color sketch from life) dull greenish black at tip and along culmen, blackish at extreme base on the sides and antimony yellow to ochraceous-buff and ochraceous-orange on sides, including the outer edge of the mandible.

Measurements.—Males (3 specimens), wing 240-242 (241), tail 105.3-109.0 (106.6), culmen from base 52.8-54.2 (53.4), tarsus 38.6-41.3 mm.

Females (2 specimens), wing 226-230 (228), tail 98.6-101.0 (99.8), culmen from base 50.0 (one specimen only), tarsus 40.7-41.0 (40.8) mm.

Type, male, wing 240, tail 102.4, culmen from base 53.4, tarsus 41.3 mm.

Range.—Apparently widely distributed through central Colombia. Recorded from Laguna de Tota (3070 m.) and Laguna de Fúquene (2430 m.), Boyacá, the Bogotá Savanna (2600 m.), Cundinamarca, and near Cali (1000 m.), Valle del Cauca.

Remarks.—While *Anas niceforoi* is evidently allied to *Anas spinicauda* the differences are of such a nature that it seems proper to present it as a distinct species. It seems doubtful that intergradation occurs and the characters of the new form appear definite and trenchant. In its dark color *niceforoi* suggests *Anas georgica* of distant South Georgia Island, which has the frontal feathering like that of *spinicauda* (figures 1 and 2) but is smaller and has a very much smaller bill (figures 5 and 6).

The female of *niceforoi* differs from the male in slightly smaller size, slightly shorter central rectrices, and in having the wing speculum Chaetura drab margined with avellaneous, instead of dull black as in the male.

The accompanying sketches (figures 1 to 6) show the differences in the bill and in the frontal feathering of the new form as compared with *Anas spinicauda* and *A. georgica*.